

*Next Meeting – November 13, 2007 – 2:00 PM  
Appoquinimink State Service Center  
Middletown, Delaware*

**GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON COMMUNITY BASED ALTERNATIVES  
FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES  
HOUSING SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING  
October 9, 2007 – 2:00 PM  
APPOQUINIMINK STATE SERVICE CENTER  
MIDDLETOWN, DELAWARE**

**PRESENT:** Daniese McMullin-Powell, Co-Chair; Sandy Tuttle, Co-Chair; Carol Barnett, DSAAPD; Lisa Becker, CDS; Kim Brockenbrough, DSHA; Kate Cowperthwait, NMSS; Marlena Gibson, DSHA; Brian Hartman, SCPD, DLP; Lottie Lee, DMS-DHSS; Elizabeth Schantz, Consumer; Susan Starrett, Homeless Planning Council; Pat Weygandt, DDDS; Kyle Hodges, Staff and Linda Bates, Support Staff

**ABSENT:** Marguerite Ashley, NCC; James Baynard, DDDS; Nate Beasley, IRI; Merton Briggs, NAMI-DE; Regina Byers, SCPD; Pete DeKunche, Chimes; Lorraine DeMeurisse, Deutsche Bank Trust Co; Micki Edelson, Homes for Life; Ron Engard, GACEC; Tony Francioni, DOL/DVR; Karen Horton, DHSA; Cliffvon Howell, DSAMH; Yolanda Jenkins, DSCYF; Patricia Kelleher, The Arc; Bill McCool, UCP; Valerie Miller, DSHA; Kirsten Olson, Connections; Victor Orija, DASSPD; Tina Riley, Delaware Housing Coalition and Paula Voshell, DSHA

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 2:10 PM.

**ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA**

- Kyle asked the DSHA to give an update on the Housing Locator codes.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the July 10, 2007 meeting minutes as submitted.

**BUSINESS**

**DHSA Needs Assessment**

Marlena gave the following update. The official release of the Needs Assessment report will be given at the DSHA Governor's Housing Conference on November 14. Marlena appreciates all the help she received in getting the information for the report. Marlena feels all the suggestions have been incorporated in the special populations section. Also, a paragraph was added on the need for coordinated data – this was a suggestion from the July committee meeting. It is included in the larger technical document and also in

paragraph one of the Executive Summary. Marlena added that there is a lot of qualitative information and less quantitative information that would have been useful for budget, policy and advocacy purposes. The Executive Summary is built around the twelve points of housing dynamics in Delaware. Today's hand-outs include the Overview Section (twelve points), a Housing Fact Sheet and a Timeline Chart. Marlena added that they would be happy to come back to the December 11 meeting and give an update/official presentation with copies of the Needs Assessment Report for the Committee.

Sandy added that it would be important for the committee to look at this information and: 1) understand what the information is telling us; and 2) it is not too early to think about what we need to put in place in the next go around (5 years off) and what can we do to improve the quality of the product.

Kim and Marlena reported that the Executive Summary, which is 100 pages, will be included in the November 14 conference packet. The Technical Report is about 350 pages which will be available for download. Kim added that the Technical Document is normally used for writing grants or lectures.

Brian asked if the New Castle County accessory dwelling was discussed. Marlena reported that it was not discussed.

Marlena review the Housing Needs Assessment Overview (12 points):

1. Delaware housing values have increased faster than inflation.

Marlena added that the median home prices in Delaware have appreciated faster than the household incomes.

2. The Delaware housing market is providing more higher-priced units than "affordable" units.

Marlena added that there are more single family homes on larger lots. Kyle added that he read this week-end that New Castle County is proposing an ordinance requiring developers to add a certain percentage of affordable units. It was stated that there will be a public hearing this Thursday night.

3. The number of cost-burdened households in Delaware has increased significantly.

Marlena added that we have the housing in Delaware; but it is cost burden in many cases.

4. Many cost-burdened households are active members of DE's workforce. They are engaged in occupations critical to community stability. However, their salaries are not keeping pace with increasing housing costs.

Marlena added that police, fire fighters, sales persons (and a full range of occupations that have been reviewed) are having difficulty finding affording housing.

5. Employment growth in Delaware is fastest among lower paying industry sectors.

Marlena added that we are investing a lot of money for higher paying jobs; however, the higher paying jobs that did not require a higher skill level are not being replaced.

6. Population growth in Delaware is occurring more slowly than household growth, due to changing composition of households (e.g. deferred age of marriage, increased divorce rates, and longer life expectancy).

Marlena added that this is a slow-long-term trend but, it is on-going. A lot of larger single family homes are being built; but the need is for smaller homes to be built for different age levels. Marlena added that the population growth is mainly in Kent and Sussex Counties.

7. Household growth is expected to add over 20,000 households by 2012. Most household growth will occur at higher income levels.

Marlena added that the population in the state is shifting.

8. Preserving existing affordable housing and meeting current demand among cost-burdened households is critical.

Marlena added that the demand is on existing DE households.

9. Persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and individuals with disabilities face diverse and critical housing needs. Often having extremely low-incomes, this segment of the population faces major affordability and accessibility challenges.

Marlena added that there are critical housing needs for the Interagency Council on Homelessness.

10. Mortgage defaults, the deepening subprime loan crisis, and receding availability of credit will make homeownership more difficult for middle and low income households.

Marlena added that a lot of the information was derived from research from the State Bank Commissioner's Office (foreclosures).

11. Assisted rental units facing possible conversion to market rates need to be preserved.

Marlena added that this is one of the most pressing needs. And, we need to preserve what we have. The major risks are that the loss of units to market rate housing or loss from disrepair. This is a continued priority.

12. Public opposition to higher density residential development is a recurring barrier to the development of affordable housing. Good design, planning and increased public awareness are needed to overcome this barrier.

Marlena added that this continues to play a large role in hindering affordable housing throughout the state.

Kyle asked if there was any data about in the final version. Were some of the numbers we provided removed? Marlena added that the DDDS information was updated. DSAMH also provided some numbers. Kim added that they made some connection between people with disabilities that have fixed incomes are often cost burden due to the rising housing prices. More income information for people with disabilities is needed in the future with their housing costs, if they are sharing homes or are in nursing homes because of lack of affordable housing. Sandy added that we were dependent on the Assessment Sub-committee to come up with that data for this report. Kyle added that the Discharge Planning Committee is now doing some work. Kim said that the Assessment and Discharge Planning Committee are planning for people to exit a service into another community service. The Discharge Planning Committee is looking at what constitutes good planning. They are just trying to bring the advocates for the homeless and people with disabilities together. Kyle asked where the DSHA is in the process of revamping the document and would it be appropriate for this committee to interface. Kim said that there is an Exemplary Practices Document that came from Connecticut and Delaware does not have that kind of system in place. The object is to make it work for Delaware and keep the key components in planning for people's discharge so it is not the Director of Nursing who makes the decision of where the person would go - other people are included in the decision making. There is an effort to go through that document slowly and really make it a Delaware document. People will be able to comment on the document on how we can make this work and what we need to do with our system. The concern is how fast do we get there. Kim is hoping that the DSHA and other groups, before the next five years needs assessment, could get some good data in place for people with disabilities and the homeless. If we had the need assessments focusing on these populations, when the five year plan is due, we would not have to do a lot of research. The next meeting to discuss this document will be October 29. Kim added to look at the New Castle County Housing Fact Sheet hand-out which has a lot of good information.

### **Final Commission Report and Path Forward**

Kyle asked how the Committee should proceed given that the Commission report is final. Sandy stated that the good thing about this sub-committee is that we have all the key stakeholders and owners (state agencies) together. Kim said that one objective was to get all the public housing authorities applications electronically on-line. DSHA went forward without the other housing authorities participating since they would not go along with this application process. Sandy said we need to try and find out a way to get the other housing authorities to participate. Kim said that Sandy Johnson, the DSHA Executive Director, had a good idea; other PHAs have boards with vacancies and it

would be good if those vacancies could be filled with people who are disability advocates. Then we would have a better chance of getting this coordinated. Kim said the Committee could task DSHA to figure out the board member process. Sandy said that each objective/action needs a work plan. For example, take the FY 08 actions, and talk about the details of how we could execute those things with via a group discussion. Whoever the owner is, they could take it back to put it in its place. Sandy also said that if the steps cannot get us there, we need to define new action steps. Sandy said that for the November meeting, maybe we should ask the owners of each to come back and present their thinking on how the action can be carried out. Then give this committee a chance to ask questions, provide input and make sure they understand the full perspective. Kyle said, at the retreat, the one thing that was recommended was to have the DSHA be the one entity in the state to be accountable for housing. Kyle noted that when the Commission held its Retreat in March, Sandy Johnson had indicated that DSHA may have the statutory authority to get PHAs and other housing agencies/organizations to comply with DSHA plans. Kyle suggested inviting Sandy Johnson to the next meeting. Sandy noted that the object is to have a "coordinated system".

Daniese attended a meeting with CMS in Baltimore on Money Follows the Person (MFP) and brought up both letters of Secretary Alfonso Jackson's to the Public Housing Authorities. The Public Housing Authorities were supposed to have a plan that they submitted to the Secretary on how they were going to coordinate housing with the MFP plans by August 30. Daniese was wondering if Delaware responded to that letter. If so, can we get a copy of that letter? Kim stated that the other Housing Authorities had not gotten the letters from HUD. Kim did draft a letter and believes that DSHA did respond to HUD. Kim said the way that the letter was worded from HUD, it made sound as if it was not mandatory.

In summary, Sandy recommended that we take a first stab at the FY '08 steps. Committee members, who are representing various agencies that are listed as owners, take it back to their division(s) and make sure that someone is responsible to work on that step. Kim will be the owner for DSHA objectives and actions. CDS is the owner for objective F. 3. DDDS, DSAAPD and DSAMH need to work together for Objective H. Kyle suggested having Rita Langraf give an overview of the assessment committee report at the November committee meeting.

As a start, Kyle will e-mail the owners referencing this plan with the website, etc. that it is under. Sandy said that at the November 13 meeting, a stab be taken at the owners coming back with us as their suggested work plans. At the December 11 meeting, there will in an in-depth discussion of the needs assessment. Then, at the January 8 meeting, look at the individual work plans and look at the continuous process of what was accomplished and what needs to be done.

### **New Castle County Proposed Ordinance on Real Property Tax Exemptions**

Brian gave the following update SCPDs letter on this issue was provided.

In the 50s, an Ordinance was established to give all three counties tax exemptions to the elderly for real property taxes. Each of the counties has implemented that ordinance and far exceeded the limits in the state statute. New Castle County, in September, proposed to cut back on exemptions because they felt they were too liberal and wanted to help balance their budget by cutting back on the tax exemptions. We commented on the proposed ordinance at that time and about five hours before it was going to be voted on, September 11, the sponsor pulled it because they were getting so much input from the public. A little while later they introduced a new ordinance to change the residency duration for the elderly and persons with disabilities to having to be a resident for four years by July 1. There is an income cap so it would be low-income persons qualifying. They have agreed in the new ordinance to keep the current rate for the elderly to \$50,000 income exclusive of your social security to either individuals or a couple. In 2004, they increased the elderly exemption, but left the persons with disabilities exemption at \$40,000; therefore, there is a disparity. Because of the SCPDs comments in September, the income limit for disabled homeowners is now \$50,000 so they can have parity with seniors. Under the new ordinance, the property tax exemption would be reduced to \$32,000 for seniors and persons with disabilities. Under the current law, there is no cap on the cost of your house; now there is a cap of a \$125,000 assessment which equates to a \$400,000 house. Sewer bills would also be affected. Currently there is a flat sewer fee of \$36.00 annually; under the new proposal you would be billed at 50% of total sewer charges or a minimum bill set by Council, whichever is greater. SCPD had the following comments: First, those who are already getting the exemption should be grandfathered. Second, we endorsed the restoration of equity between the elderly and persons with disabilities. Third, we suggested an amendment to change the \$40,000 income cap to the \$50,000 cap for persons with disabilities. Fourth, there is a supplemental exemption for certain taxpayers who have paraplegia or lost of limbs—they get an additional \$40,000 exemption—however the language is very old which would not cover someone with congenital problems.

Brian said that the vote is tonight unless things have changed. If anyone knows any other information, please forward to Kyle and he will keep everyone updated. If Susan Starrett receives any information on the Thursday night Land Use Council meeting, she will forward the information to Kyle. Carol said that the Housing Trust Fund is being introduced today.

### **Housing Locator Update**

Kim reported that DSHA has put into a database all the assisted units that are known statewide. GIS is hooked into the database so if you say you want a two bedroom unit in Kent County that is less than \$400 a month, it will tell you what is available and what qualifications are needed. It does not tell you what units are available but it does tell you what units are out there, so you would need to call specific complexes to find out what is available and then get on a waiting unit. Accessible units are also identified. There are 13,615 existing housing units; but, what is available is less than 10%. Homeless shelters and 811s have probably not been included—since they are programs that you do not call up and get on a waiting list. The DSHA IT is hopeful that this system will be up

and running by the end of October or the first of November. Kim said that once it goes live, a demo could be provided at the next committee meeting.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Carol Barnett reported that she has been involved in making recommendations for the “Aging/Disability tract to be incorporated in a year”.

The State Council for Persons with Disabilities Annual Luncheon will be held on Thursday, November 15, 2007 from 12 noon to 3 pm at the Dover Sheraton.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kyle Hodges  
SCPD Administrator  
Minsoc07.doc